



NORTHERN ROCKIES AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS

August 1, 2007

To: Line Officers/Fire Managers

Fuel conditions in the Northern Rockies are reaching all time records and fire behavior has proven to be unforgiving. The fire environment has exceeded our operational capability in many of the fuel types.

Fire managers must realize that this fire season is not “business as usual” and take into account the high resistance to control will force us to utilize tactics that focus entirely on keeping the public out of the way of large fire growth and ensuring fire management personnel are not put at risk. Many wildfires in forested areas will continue to burn until we receive a fire season-ending weather event. More helicopters, more crews and more engines may have very little influence until weather and fuel conditions moderate. It will increasingly be necessary to reposition resources to lighter fuel types to contain many of these fires.

Public and political leaders may not be aware of the situation that we will be dealing with for the remainder of the fire season. It is our responsibility to discuss with them our strategies and tactics, and most importantly our rationale of why we are implementing those strategies.

We have a very challenging fire season still ahead of us and our focus must continue to be on detection, initial attack and extended attack operations, while protecting communities from large fire growth in fuel types where we can be effective.

We continue to have close calls with fire management personnel entrapments, aviation incidents, and injuries and accidents. Fatigue, to both people and equipment, unforgiving fire behavior and loss of situational awareness are possible contributors to these potentially dangerous situations. We must continually adjust our strategy to keep people safe. We must also realize fighting the fire once these fires are beyond extended attack is secondary and our influence on the final fire perimeter will be very limited. We are asking all of you to continually step back, evaluate and ensure your priorities are aligned with a stronger focus on safety.

Signed by all the geographic area level agency administrators from the agencies listed below

State of Montana
Montana Firewardens Association
Montana Division of Disaster
and Emergency Services
MT Sheriffs and Peace Officers' Association

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service

USDA Forest Service
State of Idaho
North Dakota Forest Service
Fire Chief's Association